PRESIDENCY
FAPSI and FSB deny confrontation
The leader of the Federal Agency of Government Communication and Information, General Aleksandr Starovoi
tov, and Federal Security Service's chief Nikolai Kovalev issued an unusual joint statement on April 7, denying media reports of conflict between the agencies. The affirmation of unity by these services was apparently prompted by recent press allegations stemming from the incarceration of General Valeri Monastyretsky. Monastyretsky, the former chief of the Financial and Economic Directorate of FAPSI, was arrested last year on charges of bribery and embezzlement.

Charges were leveled against Monastyretsky after his departure from FAPSI and appear to be connected to his work for a private firm with close connections to the Information Agency. Press reports shortly after the general's arrest noted Monastyretsky's unwillingness to cooperate with FSB staff and his demands for the involvement of the Prosecutor's Office. The arrest of Monastyretsky has been seen as part of an effort by the FSB to assert control over FAPSI, as it had been controlled by the KGB until the end of 1991. (Izvestiya, 23 May 96; Moscow News, 15 Aug 96)

The Monastyretsky case resurfaced in the news when FSB Colonel Mikhail Astakhov discussed details of the charges in an interview with Nezavisimaya gazeta (29 March 97). Astakhov, head of the Military Counterintelligence Department, has since been relieved of his duties for divulging information about the case. On April 7, the charges against Monastyretsky were re-formulated by
the prosecutor apparently in accordance with the new Criminal Code adopted in January. On April 9, a senior investigator in the prosecutor's office, Boris Uvarov, asked for an extension of Monastyrets'ky's detention to eighteen months (he has been in jail since April 12, 1996) in order to continue the investigation unimpeded. (ITAR-TASS, 9 Apr 97)

**Borodin's discretionary funds?**
Pavel Borodin, head of the President's Economic Management Administration, has been quite vocal in his opposition to the recent instruction that government officials trade in their foreign luxury cars for Volgas. As the key official responsible for procuring and disbursing political perks, he clearly has some experience in the relative value of the automobiles of the elite. It seems, however, that his purview expands beyond the selection of apartments and automobiles for Russia's politicians. Borodin recently toured an aircraft factory in Saratov, where he pledged ten million dollars for the completion of an airplane dubbed the "flying saucer." The flying saucer's design innovations include an aerodynamic wing system to give it extra lift, and an increase in payload capacity of up to 40 percent of its weight. The factory's director, Aleksandr Yermishin, claims the new plane will be particularly effective in carrying water for firefighting operations. (ITAR-TASS, 10 Apr 97)

**Box of money dropped, but campaign funds to be audited**
The Russian Prosecutor has decided to end the investigation into the $534,000 taken out of the Kremlin and confiscated by the Main Guard Directorate on June 19, 1996. The original charges leveled against the campaign staffers involved are no longer considered criminal according to Russia's new laws on foreign currency transactions. While several officials will certainly be relieved at the end of the criminal investigation, the issue of campaign funds may still spark new controversies. The president's Audit Chamber, headed now by Vladimir Putin, is planning to review the use of federal budget and non-budget funds for the 1996 presidential elections. Included in the Audit Chamber's review will be the
"reliability of accounting and the degree of payment for all mass events related to political advertising of candidates, the 'Vote or Lose' project in particular."
(Interfax, 9 Apr 97)

RF SECURITY ORGANS
MVD, FSB stress legal reform in fight against corruption
MVD Chief Anatoli Kulikov criticized the April 8 Presidential decree on anti-corruption tasks as "only partly cover[ing] matters related to corruption." A new document, to be drafted with the cooperation of the Prosecutor's Office and other law enforcement agencies, is currently under consideration. Among the most crucial elements of tax reform and collection, Kulikov cited the adoption of a new tax code, which is to be submitted to the Duma later this year. Among the new initiatives for collecting taxes, Kulikov recommends the "issue of tax passports to companies." (Interfax, 9 Apr 97)

FSB Director Nikolai Kovalev has also cited the need for new legislation to support the anti-corruption efforts: "There is a need to adopt a number of principled laws and primarily a law on corruption." Among the initiatives Kovalev envisages is a measure to grant financial authorities the right to set up conditions for testing an official's integrity, such as offering a bribe—a practice which often leads to charges of entrapment in this country. Kovalev did insist, however, that such a right would be "only for financial organs and in no case for law enforcement agencies." (Interfax, 15 April 1997)

RF DEFENSE COUNCIL
Rodionov denounces Armenia arms sales, reveals constraint on dismissals
In an interview with Moskovsky komsomolets, Defense Minister Igor Rodionov claimed that he had seen no orders by the political leadership on the transfer of arms to Armenia. According to Rodionov, the sales were initiated by the military, demonstrating "that the leaders of various command directorates formed a single cartel." Rodionov was slightly more circumspect as to whether or not the political
leadership was aware of the sales: "The impression is that the state leadership was not fully briefed on the actual situation. And the generals took advantage of the great trust that was vested in them." (Moskovsky komsomolets, 12 Apr 97)

On the subject of the dismissal of General Semenov and other leading military officials, Rodionov claimed that during discussions with the president, Yel'tsin had agreed to the dismissals "but nothing has been done." In the case of former Chief Military Finance Manager Vorobyev, Rodionov claims he was "suspended by a presidential edict nearly two years ago but has not been discharged. Eighteen members of the Higher Certification Commission voted for his resignation. Only Yuri Mikhailovich Baturin was against. Because Baturin handles all documents, it seems his opinion outweighs that of all others." (Moskovsky komsomolets, 12 Apr 97) A recent presidential decree has finalized the dismissal of Semenov and three other high-ranking military officials. (Interfax, 11 Apr 97)

**Russian Federation: Foreign Relations**

By Chandler Rosenberger

**Likely future Iranian president wraps up visit to Russia**

'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, speaker of the Iranian Majles (parliament) and leading contender in upcoming presidential elections, enjoyed a warm reception from the Russian Duma and Russian president Boris Yel'tsin during a three-day visit from 11 to 14 April.

Nateq-Nuri returned the hospitality by echoing many of Russia's complaints about NATO expansion and calling for cooperation among China, Iran and Russia to establish a regional "axis." He also warned that Russia and Iran must cooperate to thwart exploitation of oil in the Caspian "lake." "The situation is extremely dangerous," Nateq-Nuri told deputies of the Russian Duma, "and can
result in irreparable ecological damage, as well as encroachment by foreign plunderers.” (Moscow Voice of Russia World Service, 11 Apr 97)

Nateq-Nuri and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov also hinted that the two nations might collude to bring to Afghanistan the "peace" that had prevailed in Tajikistan thanks to their joint efforts. (IRNA, 11 Apr 97)

**Primakov nobbles French foreign minister over dinner in Paris…**

Fears that Russia might yet find a way to water down the upcoming expansion of NATO were not allayed by the friendly dinner Primakov enjoyed with French foreign minister Herve de Charette in Paris on April 9.

"Yevgeniy Maksimovich Primakov has been a friend for two years now," Charette said as the two sat down to the restaurant table. "We meet every month or every two months and, whenever possible, we have dinner together in a friendly way."

Primakov said he supported French designs for a more "Europeanized" NATO that pursued a peacekeeping role. "If the French general is installed in Naples at the head of the southern command…” Primakov said before pausing. "Far be it from us to interfere in NATO's internal affairs,” he continued, "but, in any case, I will greet him with the greatest pleasure." (LCI Television, 9 Apr 97)

There were no reports as to which minister picked up the tab this time out. But a Belgian commentator noted that French President Jacques Chirac owed the Russians a great favor for agreeing to sign their agreement with NATO in Paris in May. "It would symbolize this rebalancing which is taking place in the NATO arena between Russia, Western Europe and the United States," Pierre Lefevre noted, "and provide evidence of a certain very Gaullist complicity between Russia and France or Russia and Europe." (Le Soir, 14 Apr 97)

... while Zyuganov thunders about Western threat to Russia
Apparently weary from moderating his tone on his January tour of the United States, National Patriotic Front leader Gennadi Zyuganov blasted the current Russian leadership for having "sufficient will only to starve the country for the sake of their personal, selfish interests and in response to the diktat of the International Monetary Fund."

"We should have no illusions," Zyuganov wrote in Sovetskaya Rossiya on April 10. "The West sees Russia as its most dangerous opponent. An opponent who has been weakened, bloodied, and bowed, but not beaten once and for all and who is capable of recovery."

Zyuganov alleged that the collapse of the USSR had been preceded by a meeting of the Bilderberg Club at which "David Rockefeller, a very powerful American banker and head of the highly influential Trilateral Commission" purportedly called for the establishment of a "single world government." "A supranational government of the intellectual elite and world bankers," Zyuganov reported that Rockefeller said, "is preferable to the right of peoples to self-determination." (Sovetskaya Rossiya, 10 Apr 97)

**Chinese president to visit Moscow**
Chinese President Jiang Zemin will visit Russia from April 22 to 26 at the invitation of Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

In a Russian state broadcast to the Chinese in Mandarin, a Russian foreign ministry spokesman said that both Russia and China "hold that this is a transition period when the world is moving from a bipolar to a multipolar configuration, that is, no country should expect to be given exceptional treatment. Russia and China will become two important and independent poles in the multipolar world." (Voice of Russia World Service, 7 Apr 97)
Axis to Grind

It was no doubt unintentional, but Iranian president-to-be 'Ali Akbar NateqNuri was helpful when he described his envisioned alliance of China, Russia and Iran as a regional "axis." As Walter Laqueur recently argued in Fascism: Past, Present, Future, Islamic fundamentalism more than any other contemporary phenomenon resembles German National Socialism in its loathing of liberal democracy. If the three should work together to promote the kind of "peace" that Tajikistan now suffers from, the Central Asian states will have great cause to worry.

One might hope that contemporary Russia shares with Iran only the political lexicon of opportunism. In this dictionary, the Caspian is not a "sea," which would require international negotiations with the Central Asian and Caucasian states on its shores, but rather a "lake" whose development (see "exploitation") needs region-wide agreement before Western companies (see "plunderers") can begin production.

Gennadi Zyuganov's recent anti-Western tirade might give the Western observer reason to fear that a vast section of the Russian elite shares a great deal more with the Iranian mind than one would hope. Zyuganov is, after all, leader of the Russian Duma's largest single parliamentary bloc. Should such paranoids at long last seize the Kremlin, the foreign policy coming out of the Kremlin today would seem to speak to the foresight of its creator. For the definition of this kind of long-range and self-serving opportunism, see "Primakov." Just don't let him buy you dinner.

Russian Federation: Political Parties and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman
Newly elected LDPR governor of Pskov Oblast interviewed
Yevgeniy Mikhaylov, State Duma deputy from the LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia), won the elections for governor of Pskov Oblast. He is the only Zhirinovskiy-ite in Russia to hold a governor's seat. With regards to relations with Latvia, Mikhaylov says that they should, "make their claims… It seems to me that they themselves do not believe that someone will hand something over to them. However, no one will object to foreign investment in the oblast. Mikhaylov is also the author of the little known tract, "The Burden of an Imperial Nation." He also formed his cabinet—and his contingent of bodyguards—almost exclusively from the ranks of the LDPR. These elections results do not bode well for Russian/Latvian relations. (Obshchaya gazeta, 6 Mar 97)

Gubernatorial election results analyzed
The gubernatorial elections are not yet over. Still ahead are important elections in Kemerovo, Tula, and Tver Oblasts. However, governors won mainly where a few months ago Yel'tsin beat G. Zyuganov, and lost, as a rule, where Yel'tsin also lost. Incumbent governors kept their seats in 23 regions, in 18 of which B. Yel'tsin overcame G. Zyuganov in the presidential elections, and lost in 24 regions, of which in 11 G. Zyuganov came out ahead of B. Yel'tsin. In other words, of the 47 federation components where elections of administration heads took place, B. Yel'tsin lost in 16 and won in 31—a ratio close to the national average.

Also mysterious is the de-ideologization of the campaigns. Most of observers expected the gubernatorial elections to become a decisive new battlefield between the left and the demo-centrists. Although Zyuganov predicted ideological warfare, questions of an ideological nature were not discussed at all. (Rossiyskiye vesti, 6 Mar 97)

Duma passes law on opposition political activity
The bill, proposed by a communist deputy and now subject to approval by the Federation Council, defines opposition activity as any activity, at both national and regional levels, opposed to the policy of the president and government. The law, if enacted, would allow opposition activity both within and outside legislative bodies. It would prohibit the prosecution of any political groups, any of their members or any unaffiliated individuals for voicing ideas or views opposed to the government policy. However, it would ban what the bill terms as activity aimed at fanning social, racial, ethnic or religious hatred or hostility and appeals for physical violence. It would permit suspension of opposition groups by court order.

The proposed law would allow any group which won a minimum of 20% of votes at the latest parliamentary election to form a shadow cabinet. The bill was passed by a vote of 266 to 48, with one abstention. The purpose of this law is unclear—unless one assumes that the communists fear that their oppositional status may become permanent. The Russian constitution already provides for freedom of political thought, association, and political participation. (Interfax, 5 Mar 97)

CPRF congress seeks party centralization

The tenth plenary session of the CPRF was held at the Parliamentary Center on 3 March 1997. For the first time, the communists made no secret of the venue, even inviting journalists to listen. Despite the fact that the "rejuvenation of secretaries" is in full swing and they are no longer engaged in "self-destructive practices," there is "mutual suspiciousness and distrust on the part of hysterical elements within the party…"

The gist of the proposals concerning the reform of the rules was to centralize "the leading and guiding force" (the CPRF) and to create within the Central Committee a "strategic agency" to formulate party policy, and an executive agency (the secretariat to be headed by a "general secretary" chosen from among the party leaders).
While the terminology harks back to earlier times, a highly centralized party structure in an increasingly decentralized political environment suggests that a return to the past is not likely. As recently evidenced by regional elections, local issues were most important and it is unlikely that party centralization will or can help. In fact, attempts to strengthen party solidarity will inevitably lead to schism. A better approach would be to instill flexibility into the party structure—something communist parties have never understood. (Moskovskiy komsomolets, 4 Mar 97)

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Lt. Col. Cathy Dreher and CDR John G. Steele

NATO Expansion
Beginning with the Helsinki Summit and over the past several weeks it seems Russia has basically acquiesced to the expansion of NATO in the context of eastern Europe, but Russia still strongly opposes the incorporation of any former members of the Soviet Union, and questions concerning the building of "military infrastructure" on the territory of any new NATO states remain (OMRI Daily Digest, 24 Mar 97).

Comment
Repeated stories have surfaced that Yel'tsin will sign a Russia-NATO Charter in late May. Among the many outstanding questions are the future status of the Baltics and other former members of the Soviet Union—that is, what has the West given up long term to gain this limited and ambiguous Russian acceptance?

Russian Military Woes
A paratroop brigade in Stavropol Krai reportedly refused to take part in maneuvers until its wage arrears were paid (OMRI Daily Digest I, 24 Mar 97). Paratroop units have historically been viewed (by themselves and others) as elite units. The report, if accurate, does not encourage confidence in the discipline or morale of Russian conventional forces.

Despite continued severe financial difficulties in the Russian military, construction continued on nuclear-survivable underground facilities in the Urals. (Reuters, 1 Apr 97). How could such construction possibly be justified in the context of the present political situation, or the Russian fiscal environment? Either they are not acting rationally, or their world view is radically different from the Russian attitude that is being portrayed in the Western media.

Amnesty International recently reported that in the Russian military, “torture, and ill-treatment of soldiers through starvation, rape, and beatings are widespread. The military is characterized as a "gulag-style" institution where 3,000 troops died of suicide or "criminal incidents" in 1994. (Monitor, 4 Apr 97).

Comment
Such reports are consistent and commonplace—in the case of the conventional forces. These reports are not usually seen in relation to Strategic Forces, nor border troops, nor troops of the Interior Ministry. The implications are obvious as to the clear priorities of the Russian authorities.

Arms Control
At the Helsinki Summit Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin issued joint statements on arms reductions, anti-missile defenses and the elimination of chemical weapons. Movement toward START-III was indicated. (Monitor, 24 Mar 97)

International incidents
Russia continues to chase Turkish trawlers in Georgian Black Sea waters. (Monitor, 26 Mar 97). These continued actions supposedly demonstrate: (1) Georgia's inability to police her own borders; (2) the need for continued de facto Russian control of those borders; and (3) the continued foreign "threat" to those borders. Malign Russian complicity in the various Caucasian conflicts has been a persistent rumor for sometime. Given the recent events in Abkazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, it's hard to see how another conclusion could reasonably be drawn.

CIS Relations
The Russian Duma ratified a 25-year military base treaty for Armenia, which will, when ratified by the Armenian parliament, "commit the country to satellite status for the life span of the next generation." (Monitor, 21 Apr 97) In addition, "illegal" Russian arms shipments to Armenia have been all but confirmed. (Monitor, 25 Mar 97). This revelation calls into question Russia's role as "peacekeeper" (not to mention her neutrality) in the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. While much noise has been made concerning the prosecution of those responsible, the prospects of any meaningful investigations are, given Russia's record in cases of this kind, virtually nonexistent.

Large-scale firings of senior officers occur
The Armed Forces continue to disintegrate and be adrift with lack of pay, inadequate housing, food shortages and no real end in sight. Promises of resolution abound with little hope of success. What is occurring that is interesting is the large-scale firing of senior military officials (Interfax, 18 Mar 97). Two reasons may explain these firings: Yeltsin is trying, without success, to find someone to fix the problem, or significant graft and corruption exist in the top positions in the military. "This applies to several generals who are not on par with their expected duties or who, instead of carrying out their duties, are involved in activities incompatible with their position." Once identified they are being
removed. None of these actions does much to resolve the military issue but there is a perception that Yeltsin is trying.

Military exercises planned, despite budget shortages
Despite numerous shortages in the military, several military exercises are scheduled for the next few months. In the US when funding shortages occur one of the first cuts taken is exercises. They are often reduced in scope or canceled altogether. Given the funding shortages in Russia, participation in new exercises is cause for speculation. They are largely US or NATO Partnership for Peace exercises: Sea Breeze 97 (Interfax, 7 Mar 97), Centrasbat 97 (Interfax, 11 Mar 97). It is likely that Russia needs to have her military viewed as capable. On the homefront, exercises along her troubled borders could be a scare tactic for troubled areas to cease and desist. (ITAR-TASS, 14 Mar 97; Radio Rossi Network, 20 Mar 97; and ITAR-TASS, 21 Mar 97)

Threat from atomic secrets disclosure apparent
Russia is carrying out large-scale conversion of its nuclear industry and retraining of its personnel. (Moscow Sovetskaya, 1 Mar 97). "The following figures illustrate the size of its task: The Russian Federation has 34,000 nuclear and radiation hazardous facilities, 29 nuclear power units, 113 scientific research reactors and critical and subcritical assemblies containing nuclear materials, 21 enterprises involved in the fuel-power cycle, 245 nuclear submarines, of which 120 have been decommissioned, containing 170 nuclear reactors with undischarged fuel, 12 nuclear surface vessels, thousands of tonnes of spent nuclear fuel, and 3 billion curies of temporarily buried radioactive waste. All this is in various departments, where conditions are difficult because of conversion." This is a significant amount of nuclear material. There is good reason for public concern about careless storage and use of nuclear materials, and over theft, illegal trade and mis-use of nuclear materials. Future meetings of the summit of 8 will include requests for aid in handling nuclear waste. These leaks of formerly secret data may be an attempt to pave the way for monetary aid requests.
Nuclear testing victims appeal for help
A long standing problem in Russia has been its handling of nuclear materials. Throughout the Cold War era, there were incidents involving nuclear tests, nuclear waste handling, and nuclear reactors. Recent message traffic indicates that there is concern in Russia for persons who were victims of nuclear testing. It appears that these incidents will now be investigated and necessary treatment provided for victims.

Accidental nuclear strike possible
Col Robert Bykov, former Strategic Missile Force member and current assistant to a Duma deputy, stated that in his experience Igor Rodionov's alarming statements on the "reduced reliability and stability of the strategic nuclear forces' command and control system" were absolutely correct. He said this in contrast to the press' earlier disparaging label of "hysterical." Bykov went so far as to say "we could launch an accidental nuclear strike on the United States in the matter of seconds it takes you to read these lines." His intent is to focus on the ongoing pay problems in the forces, indicating that "the patience of these officers is not infinite and that there is no guarantee of psychological stability in today's forces." (Komsomolskaya pravda, 15 Mar 97).

Complaints from Kazakhstan have surfaced over Russia's establishment of border posts between the two countries manned by irregular Cossack units—and refusal to establish border markers. (Monitor, 27 Mar 97) Cossack units (famed for their ferocity) were one of the principal means of Tsarist establishment and maintenance of the empire, particularly in the south. The reemergence of these units, with official Russian sanction, cannot but be seen as threatening by the Central Asian and Caucasian republics.

Russian Federation: Chechnya
International flights from Grozny airport

In order to facilitate the hadj, the pilgrimage to the Moslem holy places in Mecca and Medina, charter flights between Grozny's Severnyy airport and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia were organized. (ITAR-TASS, 4 Apr 97) All border and customs procedures were conducted at Severnyy and a team of Russian customs officials was readied to take charge of the process. (ITAR-TASS, 5 Apr 97) Since airlines and international airports are an important attribute of sovereignty, Yeltsin's representative to the talks with Chechnya, Ivan Rybkin, tried to characterize the flights as a Russian goodwill gesture and an exceptional occurrence.

Border issues

President Aslan Maskhadov met with Georgian Defense Minister Vardiko Nadibaidze and Ingush President Rulsan Ayushev on 6 April to discuss the border arrangements among them. Russian border service patrols the Georgian side of the Chechen-Georgian border and the Russian side has recently proposed to set up additional border posts there. (Novoye vremya, 6 Apr 97) Georgia's border protection arrangement is of particular importance to the Chechen side since the rest of Chechnya borders Russian territory.

One Chechen and one Ingush policeman were killed during a shootout on the border between Ingushetia and Chechnya on 6 April. A Duma deputy, Mikhail Gutseriyev, seized on the event to urge greater federal involvement in guarding the border. (ITAR-TASS, 7 Apr 97) To ensure that in the future such border incidents would not be perceived as aggressive Chechen actions, President Maskhadov prohibited members of Chechnya's militia to carry firearms or wear uniforms when visiting neighboring regions. (ITAR-TASS, 9 Apr 97)

A more serious confrontation seemed imminent but was averted in Dagestan when local Chechen and Kumyk residents took over the building of the local
administration in Khasavyurt. They were angered by the appointment of an Avar as head of the local administration. In response 300 Avars declared their readiness to move against the Chechen and Kumyks. The Chechen Vice President, Vakha Arsanov, urged the Dagestan police to solve the matter without violence and declared his readiness to send formations from Chechnya to Khasavyurt if the local Chechens were fired upon. (Ekho moskvy, 9 Apr 97) Dagestan police, guarding the border with Chechnya, were instructed to shoot at armed groups coming from Chechnya. (NTV, 10 Apr 97)

On 12 April MVD and Ministry of Defense units held exercises in Stavropol Kray to coordinate the activities of the various police, military, reserve and Cossack forces in the event of armed formations entering Stavropol from Chechnya. Three days later TASS reported that the law enforcement agencies of Stavropol were considering digging a deep trench along the entire (114 kilometer) border with Chechnya to ward off would-be terrorists or cattle thieves.

In reference to these events, the Security Council Deputy Secretary, Leonid Mayorov, announced that an April meeting of the Security Council will take up the entire spectrum of political and military arrangements in the North Caucasus, including the issue of strengthening the border between Stavropol and Chechnya.

**Comment**

In recent weeks the Chechen authorities have formally apologized to the Georgian government for the aid they had given to the Abkhaz, which opens the way for renewed cooperation between the two countries. The Georgians, who have been protesting the presence of Russian border guards on their borders, and the Chechens, who would also like to see the end of the Russian patrols, may now be able to coordinate their efforts to rid the Georgian-Chechen border of the Russian military presence there.
The border protection issue is a sensitive one for the Russian authorities who wish to emphasize that the borders are administrative and internal only. However, given the initiatives to bolster security and create new militarized checkpoints along these borders, the distinction between international and internal borders becomes one of little relevance to the situation on the ground.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Alexandra S. Y. Kim

Belarus Charter is a disappointment
Although Belarusian President Lukashenka would not publically admit he is disappointed with the Russian-Belarus unification treaty, or the charter, he stated that what is important is not "insisting on a discussion of the union charter." (Interfax, 8 Apr 97) As expected, the much-needed establishment of a single currency for Belarus will not go into effect for another two or three years. (ITAR-TASS, 9 Apr 97) However, he continued to capture the media’s attention with his international conference on "Prospects for the Creation of a Space Free from Nuclear Weapons in Central and Eastern Europe" on 8-9 April. (Belapan, 16 Apr 97)

OSCE experts arrive to meet prime minister for human rights
On 15 April Belarusian Prime Minister Linh received a delegation of OSCE experts on human rights problems. During the peaceful demonstration protesting the Russian-Belarusian union, human rights were violated by the Belarusian police on 2 April. About 200 people were detained and as many as 60 people were hurt; with recent bans of media coverage of such demonstrations, OSCE experts, as well as Helsinki Rights Groups, are worried about the situation in Belarus. Rudolf Thorning-Petersen, the acting chairman’s envoy, is not leading the first set of experts to visit Belarus. The first visitors were supposedly given freedom to ask anyone for information, but were forbidden to do so later. This
time, Interfax reports, Thorning-Petersen is "ready to broaden contacts with Belarus in all spheres." (Interfax, 17 Apr 97)